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Note to Editors: The following is the first of a series of monthly articles planned by the Bureau of Biological Survey, in response to requests of numerous individual editors, for distribution to interested magazines for fur farmers, fur tradesmen, and rabbit farmers. If you desire to receive these releases regularly, notify the Press Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

### FACTS FOR FUR FARMERS

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#### Furring Pens

Fur farmers who have tried them have found that furring pens, or sheds, improve materially the quality of fur produced. In fox farming, various types of furring pens or sheds are being used to develop a clearer color in the fur of foxes to be pelted.

Dr. Karl B. Hanson, director of the United States Fur Animal Experiment Station, Saratoga Springs, N.Y., transformed a building, formerly used to house rabbits, into a furring shed for foxes. This building was 55 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 10 feet high at the eaves with an A-type roof. Several portable pens were constructed on the concrete floor inside. These were bedded with straw, and the foxes were placed in them, early in September. They remained there until they were pelted in December.

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This first work demonstrated that protection from direct sunlight did, in fact, reduce the tinge or off-color, but that it was not completely effective in eliminating all the tinge.

Unquestionably hereditary factors also cause tinge, but these can and are being eliminated by pelting the breeding foxes that tend to produce pups that carry a brownish cast in the fur. Selective rather than indiscriminate mating is necessary. Improper feeding, lack of sanitation, poor housing facilities, diseases, and parasites--anything that influences the health of a fox--will impair the quality of fur.

Dr. Hanson continued his experiments until he learned definitely that placing foxes in a furring shed early in September and keeping them there until pelting time in December materially reduced the percentage of pelts with a brownish cast.

One season there was extremely hot weather in mid-September, and the contrast between the foxes in the furring shed and those in the breeding pens was especially noticeable. As the pelting season approached, the undesirable tinge increased in the foxes kept in the breeding pens, but it decreased in the foxes in the furring shed.

Clear color is important in determining the quality of a pelt. Whether a fox pelt is classed as black, extra dark, dark, medium, or light, it must be bright and clear in its color--that is, there should be no tinge or rust to give an off-color appearance. Careful fur buyers make a greater price cut for rust or tinge than for any other defect. As a rule, buyers pay more for a clear, bright-colored pelt that is not so well furred than for a well-furred skin that has brownish or faded appearance.

Progressive fur farmers who have kept informed on market requirements and on methods to control "tinge" have on the whole realized higher prices for their fox pelts than those who have given little or no attention to the possibilities of

reducing or eliminating this undesirable character.

Fall House Cleaning

Even on ranches that had a thorough cleaning up late in spring, it would be well to start a fall house cleaning within the next few weeks. Pens, dens, and premises should be in the best possible condition before the breeding season begins. Sanitary surroundings mean fewer outbreaks of disease and healthier, more vigorous animals.